



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
*1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990*

August 1, 2003

Ms. Diane Winans, Chair
Okanogan County Board of Health
1234 South 2nd Avenue
Post Office Box 231
Okanogan, Washington 98840

Dear Chair Winans,

Thank you and the other members of your board of health for allowing Don Sloma and me to come before you recently to learn more about your priority areas of concern. I really enjoyed the opportunity you afforded us for a freewheeling and very constructive discussion.

We were impressed by the attention your board has devoted to balancing the public's desire for essential services with their sense of being overwhelmed by tax burdens. We will rely the gratitude your Board members expressed at our meeting that the state's health budget placed such a high priority on public health. We share your gratitude, and are all relieved that more serious reductions in public health funding did not occur during these very tough economic times.

It was instructive to hear of the increased demand you are seeing for public health services even as you face shrinking revenue, particularly demands related to bioterrorism, unhealthy behaviors and access to medical care. It was especially useful for me to learn of the strain placed on your health jurisdiction by a small number of tuberculosis cases. I think it would be truly unnerving for our state's residents to learn that we have now so compromised our public health infrastructure that it comes close to being overwhelmed in a community like yours by an infectious disease outbreak. Your experience is an example we will use in describing to state policy makers the need for some form of public health emergency fund in our state.

Thank you for sharing your experience in using procedures modeled on Chapter 17.10 RCW to guide your efforts to achieve public health nuisance abatement on private lands. This insight will be useful to us as we attempt to sort out the sometimes contentious issue of the role and authority of public health officials to deal with public health threats on private property. We look forward to receiving the guidelines your staff uses to maximize voluntary compliance with public health protection in these circumstances. In addition, please know that we noted your concern about the very large and difficult problem of obtaining compliance with public health protection measures on federal land. It is one of several tough environmental health issues that have arisen in relation to the very large federal government presence in our state.

Thank you too for calling to our attention the issue of state regulations regarding the means of determining the number of hook ups allowable on a single well under our drinking water rules. I

think further investigation is warranted to understand the public health rationale for the current cap on the number of hook ups per well, regardless of that well's quality or capacity. Our staff will be discussing this with both the department of health and with department of ecology.

Our meeting with your board was very helpful to our ongoing efforts to learn more about community perspectives on public health issues. As I mentioned during our discussion, we intend to use the information we received from you and other Boards of Health in our 2004 State Health Report. By law, the state Board must produce this report biennially, together with recommendations for state health priorities for the ensuing biennium. We have enclosed several copies of the 2002 State Health Report with this letter. Please accept my apology for not having them available at our meeting with you.

If you would like to provide additional information, other community perspectives or other suggestions for statewide health priorities, please feel free to call or write. We will be accepting additional input from local boards of health for the state health report until September 30, 2003. We are open to hearing from you about emerging issues at any time.

If you have any further questions or requests, please call the Board office at (360) 236-4110 and one of our staff would be happy to assist you in anyway possible.

Again, thank you for allowing us some time with you in your busy schedules.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda Lake", with a stylized, cursive script.

Linda Lake, Chair
Washington State Board of Health

cc: Okanogan County Health District Board of Health Members
Lori Albert, Administrator, Okanogan County Health District
Washington State Board of Health Members
Don Sloma, Washington State Board of Health